

People's Reporter

A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

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MAKING A PARADE



WCC, Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem

Call for ending the attacks on holy sites

The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, in its press release, "calls upon the security and law enforcement agencies of Israel to expend their full efforts to protect the safety, wellbeing, and religious freedom of Christians in the State of Israel by working to prevent acts of intolerance and cruelty in the future, and by holding perpetrators accountable."

Vandalism targeting churches, cemeteries, and Christian properties, and physical and verbal abuse against Christian clergy, have increased in the past months in the Holy Land, amid ongoing political tensions within Israeli society.

Heads of Churches in Jerusalem have repeatedly raised concerns about attacks and harassment by extremist elements

in Israeli society, and the grave threats posed to the Christian presence in the city and in the region.

In a 27 July statement, Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem expressed concern over "lamentable events" that unfolded upon the grounds of the Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. "We bear witness to the intrusion by Israeli radicals, a grievous violation that



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CCA Statement Against Trafficking In Persons

"Reach Every Victim of Trafficking: Leave No One Behind"

Our faith teaches us that we are all part of one body, interconnected and interdependent. The Bible reminds us of our duty to protect the vulnerable and seek justice for the oppressed. In Isaiah 1:17, we are called to "learn to do right; seek justice, defend the oppressed, take up the cause of the orphaned, and plead the case of the widow". This commandment compels us to join hands and form partnerships to address the root causes of trafficking and work towards its eradication. It is through our collective efforts that we can build a just and compassionate society, free from the chains of exploitation.

Human trafficking, a form of modern slavery, is an affront to the foundational value that everyone is created equal and has the inalienable right to life with dignity, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Trafficking in persons is a crime of exploitation and coercion, violating the principles of justice and compassion that are at the heart of our Christian faith. Every year, millions of people are exploited within and across borders, subjected to forced labour, sexual exploitation, and various forms of dehumanisation. Civil war, ethnic conflicts, and the climate emergency exacerbate the risks of being trafficked, especially in regions like Asia. Displacement, socio-economic inequalities, and discrimination leave thousands of Asians vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers.

Tackling the global problem of trafficking requires a collective effort, transcending the boundaries of government, business, and civil society.

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strikes at the very core of the sanctity of Jerusalem, the City of Peace," reads the statement.

The heads of churches noted that they witnessed the erosion of safety for Muslim worshipers and the affront to the dignity of the Palestinian people. "Such actions transgress the principles of peace, love, and compassion that are the very essence of our faith," reads the statement. "Jerusalem, the Holy City, is a tapestry woven with the threads of sacred history, each strand contributing to the rich fabric of its spiritual significance."

The Status Quo must be cherished and safeguarded, urged the Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem.

The heads of churches reaffirmed their steadfast respect and support for the exclusive right of Muslims to Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. "Let the beacon of peace and brotherly love shine forth from the Holy City, guiding us all

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The more the wealth, the more the hunger !!

Human progress and civilisation, especially technological revolutions, have enabled manifold increase in the quantity and variety of the wealth of individuals and nations. However, very disturbingly, the more the wealth is produced, the more the people face hunger and malnutrition, both in the developed and the underdeveloped countries. Although, the statistics about this disturbing paradox is in plenty, there is no adequate, sustained efforts by the politicians and the religious people to eradicate hunger.

The Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) 2023, released recently, estimates that between 691 million and 783 million people in the world suffered from hunger in 2022. GRFC assesses food insecurity in countries, based on 16 parameters. The Report while asserting that hunger is no longer in an alarming path upward at the global level, holds that it is still above pre-COVID pandemic levels, and that the world is quite far off the track towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal-2, ie, zero hunger. The Report reveals that in 2022, an estimated 2.4 billion people did not have access to adequate food. This is 391 million more people than in 2019. Global hunger, measured by yet another metric – the prevalence of undernourishment - remained relatively unchanged in 2021 and 2022, but it is again far above the pre-COVID pandemic level, affecting around 9.2% of the world population in 2022, compared with 7.9% in 2019.

It is quite unfortunate that we are not bothered about the prevalence of hunger in the midst of heaps of wealth. In the past, until the emergence of capitalism, although the quantity and the variety of wealth were meagre, there was hunger only occasionally and rarely. However today, despite the tremendous increase in the quantity and variety of wealth, hunger has become a systemic phenomenon. Revolution in information technology, brings statistics about hunger across the world and in each country, before our very eyes. But, very disturbingly our planners, political parties and opinion-makers in the society do not take up this issue seriously.

In traditional societies, when the economy was life-centred, people used to organise economic activities with the objective of producing and distributing essential goods for sustaining the life of all people in the community. As against this, in the wealth-centred economy, planners and technocrats organise economic activities to maximise wealth. In the competition for producing more wealth, individuals, corporations and nations allocate more funds, materials, intelligence and technology to produce high-value goods like arms, luxury items, and consumer goods. As a result, less resources are left for producing life-sustaining basic goods. Further, as the pattern of production referred to above, reduces the level of employment, many people are left without purchasing power. Systemic hunger is the result of this situation. This transformation of the economy also contributes to growing disparity in the distribution of income and wealth. Today, almost half of the global wealth is held by 1% of the population. Whereas the top 10% of adults in the world hold 85% of the wealth, the bottom 90% hold only the remaining 15%!

While countries shell out trillions of dollars to conquer the Moon and Mars, they spend no time and resources to eradicate hunger in the world! What is more unfortunate is that we do not feel that the situation of billions of people denied of food for sustenance, is a matter of shame and a sin. Still we boast about human progress and civilisation!

Thought for the Fortnight

*Poverty is not an accident.
Like slavery and apartheid it is man-made
and can be removed by the actions of human beings.*
– Nelson Mandela

WCC, Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem

Call for ending the attacks on holy sites

Ensure equal human rights for all people living under their responsibility

"The WCC calls upon the government and authorities of Israel to ensure equal human rights for all people living under their responsibility, and to ensure accountability for attacks and violations against Palestinians, against the holy places, churches, Christian communities, Muslims and other groups, and to ensure free access to places of worship and holy sites."

>>> **Contd. from Page 1 Col. 4**
towards the path of understanding, reconciliation, and enduring justice and peace," concluded the statement.

WCC acting general secretary (during the vacation) Marianne Ejdersten expressed deep solidarity with the member churches and Christians of the region in their life and work, keeping the Christian faith and witness in the Holy Land as well as with all people in the region, alive and vibrant.

Referring to the increased violence, Ejdersten condemned attacks on Christians, Muslims and others seeking to exercise their right to freedom of religion in the Holy Land. "The WCC has consistently affirmed the long-held understanding that Jerusalem is a shared Holy City of three religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—and violations to the Status Quo bring division, and violence," said Ejdersten.

A report sent to WCC News by The Justice and Peace Commission of the Council of Heads of Catholic Churches in the Holy Land noted: "In recent months, attacks on Christian clergy, churches, and holy places have roused the anxiety of many of our Christian faithful, particularly in Jerusalem and Haifa."

"Spitting, verbal abuse, sometimes physical violence as well as vandalism and graffiti writing are mostly carried out by extremist religious Jews," Justice and Peace reports.

The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), the official body which represents world Jewry in dialogue with other global faith bodies including the Vatican, the WCC and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, said in a press release on 12 July "with dismay the recurrent expressions and demonstrations of intolerance in Israel perpetrated against

Christians and Christian religious sites, such as spitting and desecration of graves and churches."

The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, in its press release, "calls upon the security and law enforcement agencies of Israel to expend their full efforts to protect the safety, wellbeing, and religious freedom of Christians in the State of Israel by working to prevent such acts in the future, and by holding perpetrators accountable."

Ejdersten underlined that "the WCC calls upon the government and authorities of Israel to ensure equal human rights for all people living under their responsibility, and to ensure accountability for attacks and violations against Palestinians, against the holy places, churches, Christian communities, Muslims and other groups, and to ensure free access to places of worship and holy sites."

– WCC News



The Dome of the Rock at the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem old city. Photo: Albin Hillert/WCC

People's Reporter

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Fundamentalism

The Indian Experience

George Mathew

[Second part of excerpts from the paper 'Fundamentalism - The Indian Experience' published in the Report titled 'Crisis of Secularism in India' of the National Consultation on Crisis of Secularism in India, organized by the National Council of YMCAs of India in Bombay from 10 to 12 June 1993.]

Historians in India have underscored the fact that Hinduism as a religion is a conceptual creation of 19th century middle classes who chiefly wanted to resist proselytising Christianity. It has no central organisational structure or strict dogmas. The word "Hindu" is the result of an earlier Persian inability to say "Sindhu", the river. The people who lived beyond that river became Hindus. In an interview with a Calcutta newspaper, historian Prof. Romila Thapar had pointed out that if someone in the golden age was a Hindu, he would have been most surprised. "What on earth is that?", he would have asked. There were various sects - Vaishnavas, Shaivas and others who knew themselves as such, never as Hindus. The dominant characteristic of these sects was tolerance. Our ancient past, as Max Weber has pointed out, gave "nearly absolute freedom to religious teachers and philosophical thinkers, which has no parallel in the West before the most recent age."

The attempt today is to unite Hindus around the mythical character "Ram", making him a national hero. Ayodhya has become the symbol of this unity.

Another element of the Hindutva philosophy is that the religious minorities have got preferential benefits in Independent India because of its secular Constitution. Their argument is that because of the "appeasement of minorities," the majority community is at a disadvantage. It is true that the Indian Constitution provides for protection of, and special safeguards to, minorities and their institutions but it is not factually correct to say that the minorities have advanced and the majority community has been left behind. The fundamentalists are successful when they create a divide between "us and them" on imaginary rather than real issues.

Hindutva's efforts at uniting all Hindus are aimed at homogenisation of the hitherto heterogeneous, loose Hindu community. BJP pursues the path of Hindu homogenisation without raising questions regarding the caste structure. That is why the policy of giving

In India, 'communal' means that which pertains to a religious community without any reference to a geographical area. Communalism can be explained as "an attitude which emphasizes the primacy and exclusiveness of the communal group and demands the solidarity of members of the community in political and social action" (Robert N. Kearney). Communal riots are tensions resulting in physical violence between religious communities. With the growth of fundamentalism we have witnessed the growth of communal tensions and increasing occurrence of riots.

maximum reservation to lower castes was viewed as a serious threat to Hindu unity by BJP and was answered by the intensification of the Ram Temple movement through Advani's Rath Yatra. BJP's homogenising tendency would be threatened by any political awakening of the lower castes and Other Backward Classes (OBC) against traditional Hinduism.

Hindutva can also be seen as a dangerous attempt to subsume all little traditions of Hinduism under a single great tradition. The little traditions are those of the people, rich in secular content. The great tradition through Hinduization is hell bent to homogenise them. All this has led to a dangerous mix of religion with nationalism.

Golwalkar's Hindu Nationalism envisaged the re-establishment of a *chaturvarna* (hierarchically organised caste system) society. Indeed, his hostility to Islam was because (to quote him), Islam was the first religion to interfere with our social organisation of Chaturvarna. "Islam in India challenged our scheme of class-caste organisation. All post-Islamic sects tried to counter Islam by seeking to take the wind out of Islamic sails, by themselves making the same challenge. That is why these sects have now become a source of national division and weakness". Here, Hindutva is not only against Islam but also against the "Sufi" and Bhakti sects that it helped to spawn." By extension, Hindutva is hostile to all who challenge Manu Dharma (Manu was the law-giver of traditional Hinduism) in the social order. It has been not only hostile to Islam and the Hindu sects formed by its impact, but in the modern period, also to Christian missions and the Hindu reform movements from Brahmo Samaj to Gandhism and even to secular humanist



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ideologies like democracy, socialism, and communism. "It appears from Golwalkar's own declaration", says Sikand, a contemporary writer, "that Brahminical Hindu Rashtira would prove perhaps as oppressive for the lower caste Hindus and Hindu women of all castes (and one should add, to the Hindu reform movements which work for their liberation) as it would be for the non-Hindu minorities" (Yoginder "Hindutva and Indian Unity," Frontier, 21-3-1992). Rammanohar Lohia saw this connection between fanatic Hinduism's hostility to Islam as well as to the democratic transformation of Hindu society. Since Gandhiji had delivered great blows on "fanaticism in respect of caste, women, property and tolerance", fanaticism made "the greatest and most heinous gamble" to eliminate Gandhi as part of its war against Liberal Hinduism (Lohia: Hinduism, Fragments of a World Mind).

The Hindu Nationalists create myths not only about Babar destroying a Ram temple in Ayodhya to build the Masjid and the need to undo that history, but also about recovering other traditions and symbols of Hindu self-identity and unity destroyed

by foreign rulers and invaders. These myths are created by reinterpreting archaeological and historical halftruths as emotive symbols serving ideological purposes. They are proclaimed as matters of faith and therefore as beyond rational questioning. But the Hindutva myth "overlooks the complex historical process by which a composite culture developed in India." The two popular stereotypes they have developed, of the "tolerant Hindu" and "the bigoted and aggressive Muslim" overlook the less than cordial relationships Hindus developed towards Buddhists and Jains.

The increasing trend of fundamentalism is resulting in fascist tendencies. Historians in India agree that most of the Hindutva myths are more or less on the lines of what the Nazis in Germany and the fascists in Italy propagated in their quest for power (K.N. Panikkar).

Golwalkar was enthusiastically appreciative of Hitler's purge of the Semitic races, the Jews, to "keep up the purity of the (German) Race and its Culture", and also Hitler's preparedness to risk a World War for that purpose. Golwalkar displayed these fascist tendencies in his hostility to any "composite" nationalism or culture and in his characterisation of those "who advocated Hindu-Muslim unity as necessary to fight for Swaraj" as the perpetrators of "the greatest treason in our society" (Yoginder Sikand, "Religion and Religious Nationalism", Frontier, 9-5-1992).

Hindutva reflects "a pro-fascist yearning for uniformity and order on the part of Indian middle class" intensified by the imbalance in the distribution of the fruits of material and social development, of higher education and bureaucratic job?"

(Sukumar Muralidharan, "Mandal, Mandir aur Masjid: Hindu communalism and the Crisis of the State", Social Scientist, October 1990).

Another is the conflict dimension. In India communal means that which pertains to a religious community without any reference to a geographical area. Communalism can be explained as "an attitude which emphasizes the primacy and exclusiveness of the communal group and demands the solidarity of members of the community in political and social action" (Robert N. Kearney). Communal riots are tensions resulting in physical violence between religious communities. With the growth of fundamentalism we have witnessed the growth of communal tensions and increasing occurrence of riots.

Communalism in India has a long history. Its modern characteristics emerged with the introduction of communal representation in public institutions by the British. The Indian national movement was based on inclusive secularisation, but it had to fight all along against militant Hindu and Muslim communal and fundamentalist tendencies.

In post-partition Independent India, "the first major bombshell" of communal riots took place in 1961 in Jabalpur. This led to Prime Minister Nehru forming the National Integration Council. But the communalism in the 80s got a fillip when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi felt unsure of the Muslim support and began to "woo the merging Hindu middle castes". Following it Rajiv Gandhi surrendered to the pressure of fundamentalist Muslims during the Shah Bano controversy and enacted the Muslim Women (Protection on Divorce) Law; and at the same time responding to the reaction to it of the Hindu fundamentalists he permitted opening the doors of the Babri Masjid.

Comunalism in India is a form of fascism. It is not accidental that the Shiva Sena in Bombay, a regional fascist Hindu organisation (Adolf Hitler is its founder's hero), gave up anti-south based fascism to adopt "what is the authentic form of Indian fascism, Hindu communal ideology".

Since the Ayodhya tragedy more than 2,500 died in communal riots, thousands were injured and millions of rupees worth of properties were destroyed.

To be continued



To observe
VIOLENCE
WHY
Use
LENS?!

Empowering Women: Creating A New Social Order

Jaisy Karingattil

Women empowerment plays a crucial role in accelerating social change. Women's empowerment is a multi-faceted process that requires addressing various barriers and challenges that women face. It involves providing access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities to enhance their capabilities and self-confidence. Investing in women's education is particularly important, as educated women can play a more active role in decision-making processes and contribute to societal progress.

Empowerment, a vision deeply rooted in social analyses, embodies the essence of holistic development dreams. Various approaches and schools of thought have been formulated to address empowerment at different levels of knowledge, focusing on transforming dysfunctions in power structures at individual and inter-institutional levels. At the core of this process lies the development of a holistic personality capable of driving social change, particularly for marginalized individuals such as the poor, the illiterate, Dalits, Tribals, and women, who are often excluded from the mainstream of society.

Empowerment revolves around self-awareness and envisioning social change at the individual level, where one's ability to cope with adversity is influenced by ego, attitude, and circumstances. Central to the process is the ability to choose and demand, aligning with the right goals and pursuing them with determination. The essence of empowerment lies in a comprehensive and positive transformation of one's life, resulting in the empowerment of individuals to intervene forcefully in power relations and recreate decayed structures.

Women empowerment plays a crucial role in accelerating social change. Women actively participate in policy-making processes and decision-making bodies, advocating for their rights and contributing to societal progress. Defining the empowerment process requires encompassing intellectual, cultural, psychological, spiritual, political, and economic elements, addressing fundamental questions about its purpose, scope, and implementation.

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women's education is particularly important, as educated women can play a more active role in decision-making processes and contribute to societal progress.

Promoting gender equality in the workplace is crucial for women's empowerment. This includes ensuring equal pay for equal work, providing opportunities for career advancement, and breaking down stereotypes that limit women's career choices. By encouraging women's participation in all sectors of the economy, we can harness their potential to drive innovation and economic growth.

Empowering women also involves challenging and changing societal attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender-based violence and discrimination. This requires raising awareness about gender issues and promoting a culture of respect and equality. Providing support and resources for women who experience violence, is vital to ensure their safety and well-being. Furthermore, promoting gender-



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sensitive and responsive laws and policies, is essential to protect women's rights and ensure equal opportunities. This includes addressing issues such as child marriage, domestic violence, and gender-based discrimination in the legal

framework.

In addition to economic and social empowerment, women's political participation is essential for shaping policies that address their unique needs and concerns. Encouraging women's representation in political leadership positions and decision-making bodies can lead to more inclusive and equitable governance.

Investing in women's entrepreneurship and small businesses can also be a powerful tool for empowerment. By providing access to financial resources, training, and networks, women can build successful businesses and contribute to the economic development of their communities

Empowerment is a journey from powerlessness to power, encouraging individuals to climb the ladder of influence across all walks of life. It involves recognizing and nurturing one's potential, abilities, and freedom of choice. In this context, women's empowerment becomes essential to create

opportunities for women to fully utilise their potential, talents, and skills, making them self-sufficient and truly empowered.

Over the course of history, women's presence, participation, and leadership have often been overlooked. Therefore, it becomes imperative to re-examine and rewrite the narratives to empower women further. Women's empowerment helps correct injustices prevalent in various aspects of society, including social, psychological, cultural, political, legal, and economic spheres, aiming to eliminate discrimination against women.

The crux of women's empowerment lies in empowering individuals themselves, enabling them to recognise their strengths and utilise them effectively. Addressing historical oppressions that have dominated women's position and participation in society, is crucial. It requires women to gain strength in understanding and confronting anti-women practices, customs, and theories that persist in society. Women's active involvement in women empowerment and social transformation activities within society and politics can lead to collective defenses and struggles where gender equality is denied.

For women's empowerment and protection to be truly effective, it is essential to find positive answers to the many questions surrounding their journey. Creating a new social order that fosters women's participation, association, and leadership is pivotal in building a healthy society based on justice for women.

In conclusion, women's empowerment serves as a catalyst for social change, emphasising the transformation of power structures and the recognition of individual strengths. By enabling women to overcome historical injustices and gender-based discrimination, we can pave the way for a more equitable and just society, where women actively contribute to shaping a brighter future for all.

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ABUSES
are
ABSOLUTELY
USEless!

Contemporary Global Political Economy - 1

Changing nature of Corporations and Labour

Varughese George

The unequal global economy which we are in, was caused by the colonial exploitation of Asia, Africa and Latin America for quite a few centuries thus dividing the world as developed and under developed. In fact all the underdeveloped countries of the present day are those societies earlier affected by colonialism.

Latin America which includes Central and South America is endowed with coffee and precious metals which were incessantly transported to Spain and Portugal. China was forced to import opium that resulted in the three opium-wars between England and China that also saw the terrible defeat of China. Africa was partitioned by colonial powers - Germany, England, France, Belgium etc. From Africa not only natural resources but also able-bodied men and women were captured as slaves and transported to America and European cities. Thus the capital accumulation for industrialization in the West was sourced from the third world, a truth western economists deliberately do forget. R. P. Dutt, in his classic book India Today wrote that the British began tax collection in 1760 on receiving Diwani rights in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Within a decade, by 1770 the industrial revolution began in England! Thus the capital accumulation was being done from colonies. Irfan Habib wrote that even as early as the last decade of the 19th century one fourth of the total imports in England had come from India.

This technological and material gap thus created by colonialism cannot be overcome by any magical leap. It is a permanent truth. This persistently reflects on the contemporary international economic relations. The World Trade Report of 2022 attests that 46 developing countries are in debt distress and an equal number is facing default. The Ukraine war has made the hike in the prices of food and energy unbearable that again precipitates the global inequality. Many countries do continue subsidies wounding their development priorities and it again exacerbates the debt situation. The tight monetary policy of the US Federal Reserve strengthens dollar and it makes huge burden on borrowing countries since their currencies are being weakened. The foreign reserves of the indebted countries have fallen short by 379 billion dollars while the US Treasury deposits found a six

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fold increase. The huge surplus generated by the oil boom in gulf region saw the rulers in GCC depositing it in the US Treasury.

The transfer of capital happening from developed countries is among themselves and not to developing countries. The Corporations in Europe and US, through their affiliates and subsidiaries, exchange capital between themselves while they exploit the labour in the Third World for assembling the parts of the product, as Harry Magdoff describes, in the process of shifting of labour. The Monthly Review cites an example of how labour was exploited in the new form. The final sales price of an Apple I phone 4 is 549 dollars. It is assembled in China and the labour gets ten dollars that is 1.8 percent of the final price! When the call-centres were shifted from Ireland to India, the companies claimed that they could reduce the wages to 90 per cent. The basketball Nike Shoe is sold at 149 dollars and it is produced in Dominican Republic and the labourer gets 1.5 dollars! The master company clasps the design and branding, and shifting of labour brings great profit. To avoid taxes in host countries generated from enterprises using cheap labour, the companies deposit excess cash flows to tax havens. Keval Bharadia quotes Europol which revealed that more than 10 per cent of the global GDP is now held in tax havens!

Instead of making real investment, the monopolies are targeting their business to finance loans, investment shares, housing loans, insurance etc. This process is called 'financialisation'. The greed for easy and sudden profits led to the crash of banks and insurance companies resulting in a meltdown between



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2009 and 2012, from which the world economy has not, yet, been recovered. With the crash of banks, about six million African Americans lost their homes and many had to sleep in their cars in public parks! The United Nations evaluated that 'these regulatory failures, compounded by over reliance on market self-regulation, overall lack of transparency, financial integrity and irresponsible behavior have led to excessive risk taking, unsustainably high asset prices, irresponsible leveraging and high levels of consumption fuelled by easy credit and inflated asset prices'. The UN, then, called for 'more effective government involvement to ensure an appropriate balance between market and public interest'. But this advice went unheeded and as Marx read, 'the most mean and malignant passion in human chest, the furies of private interest' do flourish. The repeat of economic recession with soaring prices, high unemployment and low public investment is looming large.

The knowledge economy, which is a new branch in economics, is also showing signs of monopolization. The

foundational principle of knowledge society is that knowledge should be accessible to all. But knowledge economy is gearing towards the opposite, where concentration of capital in information and communication technology is in the offing. Timothy Eric Strom in his seminal essay, Capital and Cybernetics wrote that google.com that was registered in domain in September 1997 with \$one million value has now grown into a company of \$ 1.9 trillion! He calls it 'data driven advertising'. When we open the browser and search data, targeted advertisements are ready. The Covid vaccines were public funded, mostly by governments but once it had been manufactured, the pharmaceutical companies have appropriated it and sold each dose with an exorbitant price. The continent of Africa was short of vaccines because of want of funds!

The digital technology displaces labour in huge numbers. In 2022 google announced the layoff of 12000 employees! Amazon announced that the company would make 18000 job cuts, reported Ankita Garg in India Today! The Artificial Intelligence is being used in HR departments for scrutiny of bio data and efficiency of managers. But the strength of the labour is in the decline. The real wages are declining since wages are increasing not parallel to the price rise. Earlier there was a visible employer. Now thousands of shareholders share ownership. With whom the workers to negotiate? Most of the parts of one product are manufactured in different countries owing to shifting of labour. The Labour Unions are also in disarray. The French workers' struggle against the

French pension plan raising the retirement age from 62 to 64 did not find success in spite of repeated struggles from January this year.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's 2023 Annual Report states that the arms-sales in the previous year by the weapon companies totaled \$592 billion. The USA is the biggest arms-seller with its forty companies selling weapons worth \$299 billion. A new phenomenon in this area is the rise of private military and security companies (PMSC) that assist in armed conflicts. They were used in war in Europe and Afghanistan. The Wagner group, a Russian PMSC that attracted worldwide attention a month ago, has been deployed in Libya, Syria and Ukraine. The United Nations have failed in negotiating peace in the war between Ukraine and Russian Federation. Instead the European Union is purchasing more weapons for military aid to Ukraine. That is the agenda of War Corporations. They do not want peace negotiations, but they search for a militaristic solution.

A new international world economic order is the need of the hour. Julius Nyrera of Tanzania and Willy Brandt of Germany have been passionately advocating for the writing-off the debt of the poor countries, but it is of no avail. Such international forums have become irrelevant. Now the debt distressed countries like Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Bolivia, all have been forced to end subsidies and it results in serious social and political churning in the respective countries. Even the promised Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) is falling short. The rich in the developed countries and the rich in the poor countries have developed an axis so that the luxury and resources may be shared among them.

It was Andre Gunter Frank who theorized this axis of the rich and disclosed its economic and cultural perils. The poor are to fend for themselves. They are the victims of climate change, poverty, and pandemic. To protect these private interests the political ideology of populism has emerged. It is pro rich, anti-minority and anti-immigration. This ideology is making waves in Europe including Scandinavian countries sharply eroding the social base of socialist parties!

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To be continued

LAMBETH CONFERENCE

God's Church for God's world



Lambeth Call on 'Environment and Sustainable Development'

One year on, from the launch of the Communion Forest, Lambeth Conference discussions will explore the Lambeth Call on 'Environment and Sustainable Development', this September.

The Lambeth Call on the Environment and Sustainable Development is one of the ten Lambeth Calls discussed by the bishops at the Lambeth Conference held in 2022. It outlines some bold commitments in tackling environmental crises, including just financing, community resilience building, advocacy, biodiversity restoration, and promoting the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Communion Forest is also a big feature in the Lambeth Call. Bishops pledged their support for it last year, through a tree planting and service of commitment on the lawns of Lambeth Palace.

Described as a 'global act of hope', the Communion Forest is an international initiative that celebrates new and existing Anglican environmental projects. These might include tree planting, reforestation, conservation, or restoration, which combined, create a 'virtual' forest around the world. The initiative is facilitated by the

'The Lambeth Call on Environment and Sustainable development is very clear. It says: "For ourselves and for future generations we need to act now, urgently and at scale". Anglicans around the world can play a big part in responding to the environmental crises facing the planet. I invite Anglicans far and wide to join us this September, as we consider how to take the Call forward and grow the Communion Forest, through collective action and advocacy.'



Canterbury Archbishop Justin Welby in a Communion Forest Garden

Anglican Alliance and the Anglican Communion Environment Network.

The inspiration for the Communion Forest came from Kenya and other African provinces with their forestry initiatives. The Communion Forest lists several inspiring projects, including a tree growing initiative for confirmations in Ireland, reforestation in Kenya, mangrove restoration in the Philippines, advocacy against logging in the Solomon Islands,

and 'Saplings for Sacraments' in Washington, USA.

Archbishop Julio Murray, the Chair of the Anglican Communion Environmental Network will chair a webinar focused on the Call and the Communion Forest this September. Archbishop Julio addressed the Lambeth Conference last year during the environment day. He will lead an Anglican delegation to COP28 later this year.

Speaking about his hopes for the webinar this September, Archbishop Julio said: 'The



Archbishop Julio Murray speaks

Lambeth Call on Environment and Sustainable development is very clear. It says: "For ourselves and for future generations we need to act now, urgently and at scale". Together, Anglicans around the world can play a big part in responding to the environmental crises facing the planet. I invite Anglicans far and wide to join us this September, as we consider how to take the Call forward and grow the Communion Forest, through collective action and advocacy.'

The Lambeth Conference webinars are scheduled for September 20 and September 21. Contributors will include Archbishop Julio Murray Thompson (IARCA), Bishop Jo Bailey Wells (ACO), Amal Sarah (Co-Chair of the Advocacy Committee of the Anglican Communion Youth Network), Nicholas Pande (Anglican Alliance), Reverend Jacynthia Murphy (Anglican Indigenous Network) and Paulo Ueti (ACO), and Reverend Stephen Spencer (ACO). A series of resources and Bible study materials will also be shared, to aid people explore the Lambeth Call in their setting.

The webinar will be the second in the 'Add your voice to the call' series being run by the Lambeth Conference. The programme is exploring each of the Lambeth Calls from the Lambeth Conference.

— Lambeth Conference News



World Association for Christian Communication

Advance digital justice

>>> Contd. from Page 8 Col. 1

"The evidence of challenges to human rights, equality and justice in digital communication and the technology ecosystem is indisputable," said WACC Program Manager for Gender and Communication Sarah Macharia, who is coordinating planning of the partner consultation.

Macharia noted an ever-expanding constellation of digital communication rights that need to be secured and protected through policy frameworks. Among them should be included the right to access the Internet and its content and applications, the right to freedom of

"The evidence of challenges to human rights, equality and justice in digital communication and the technology ecosystem is indisputable."

"WACC wants to equip participants with knowledge and tools to defend the human rights of marginalized and vulnerable groups on digital platforms,"

expression and association online, and the right to online privacy and data protection.

She pointed to gender-based cyberviolence, a male-dominated tech sector, and unequal investor opportunities for locally founded global South start-ups, as particularly pressing digital justice issues.

"WACC wants to equip participants with knowledge and tools to defend the human rights of marginalized and vulnerable

groups on digital platforms," Macharia said.

During the consultation, WACC project partners in 12 countries shared learnings and good practices from their work on communication rights in general and digital rights in particular, while a panel of experts from Pakistan, Kenya, and India explored questions of digitalisation and intersectionality, giving special focus to gender and inclusion.

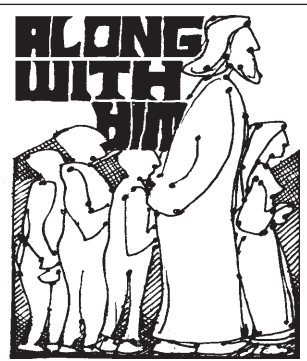
The opening plenary featured a keynote address by Dr. Grace Githaiga, CEO and convenor of the Kenya ICT Action Network (KICTANet), and a presentation by the Hon. Neema Lugangira, co-founder of the African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance.

Other consultation highlights included a panel on monitoring media reporting on refugees and internally displaced persons, with on-the-ground experience

from Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Canada, and the United States; an introduction to participatory social media monitoring developed by the WACC to address misogyny and other forms of tech-enabled hate speech; and a visit to Pamoja FM Radio, a local community broadcaster.

Plenary sessions [PDF] was live streamed on the Facebook page of WACC's Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). The consultation follows a similar forum with the WACC partners in Latin America held in October 2022.

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Mammen Varkey

After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberius; and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat; but that night they caught nothing. John 21: 1 - 3 (RSV)

The Risen Master whom the disciples had left and gone for 'fishing of fish', stood before them, on the beach, unidentified by them, John 21: 4, as a hungry man! And he later offered them breakfast !! John 21: 12. When they finished the breakfast, the Risen Master who was there before them as a hungry man asked, perhaps, the most important, critical question to Simon Peter. "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter,

"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" "You are Peter; on this rock I will build my church"

Generally, the above question is not seriously taken, and the critical aspect of that question is not fully understood. It is true that Simon Peter had declared, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God". Matt. 16: 16. And in reply, Jesus had said that on Peter the rock, he would build his church. "And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I

tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matthew 16: 17-20.

But what were the things this Peter did as a disciple of Jesus?

Four very revealing incidents may be pointed out.

i. The foundation of the church became 'Satan', the total negation of God!

We see that Peter, once, turned out to be Satan, the anti-thesis of God, total negation of godliness. We read in Mark, "And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said plainly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. (A disciple rebukes the Master!) But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter, and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men". Mark 8: 31-33.

Inauguration Of A New Way – 3

The Risen Lord went after the disciple who rejected the discipleship most

Atleast for sometime Peter became Satan! The person who was assigned the role and responsibility of the foundation of the church became 'Satan', the total negation of God!

ii. Peter refused to allow Jesus to drink the cup the Father gave him !

When Jesus was caught by soldiers sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees, Simon Peter drew out his sword and struck the high priest's slave and cut off his right ear. John 18:10. **A public act declaring Peter's refusal to travel along the way of the Cross! And Jesus had to tell him, "Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?" John 18:11**

iii. Peter, one of the most important disciples, refused to admit his discipleship!

Again, we see that Simon Peter refused to admit that he was a disciple of Jesus. Should it not be deeply deliberated upon? One of the most important disciples from among the specially chosen twelve by the Master, publicly said that he was not a disciple of Jesus! "The maid who kept the door said to

Peter, "Are not you also one of this man's disciples?" He denied it and said, "I am not." One of the servants of the high priest, a kinsman of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" Peter again denied and at once the cock crowed." John 18: 17-27

iv. Peter took the initiative to go back to 'fishing of fish'

Peter had been selected to be a 'fisher of men'. Mark 1: 16-18. But Peter, even after hearing about the resurrection of their Master, took the initiative to go back to a life of 'fishing of fish' and tempted the other disciples and made majority of the disciples also to go for 'fishing of fish'. John 21: 1-3.

The most amazing thing

The most amazing thing is that the Risen Lord went after that Peter and prepared breakfast for him too. After Peter had breakfast, Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Do you love me more than these?" John 21:15.

To be continued

LAMP UNTO THE FEET, LIGHT UNTO THE PATH

The Spring That Never Dries Up!

A. V. Itty

John 4:7-14

"Jesus aswered: Whoever drinks from this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will provide him will become in him a spring which will provide him with life-giving water and give eternal life" (vs. 13, 14).

I have heard of a young woman who didn't have the resources to make both ends meet. She lacked sufficient food and clothes. Once she got an opportunity to travel in a ship! Standing on the deck, for the first time in her life, she saw the ocean that lay even beyond the horizon! She raised her hands in the air and exclaimed: "For the first time in my life I have found something that will not be exhausted!"

In a way all physical things are limited and scarce! They do not grow as per human requirements! This deficiency is applicable to the rich and the poor alike?

It is a fact that no one who relies, for satisfaction, on physical things, is completely satisfied!

In the Scripture portion we meditate upon, in His dialogue with the Samaritan woman, Jesus said: "Who ever drinks this water will be thistry again." (v.13) This is a statement with many levels of meanings! No water that the world gives will ever satisfy the thirst of the human beings fully! It could only increase the thirst of those who drink it.



Whether it is money, power, or fame, it is true. The more you drink, the more thirsty you become! Unless one finds satisfaction of one's thirst in God, nothing in this world can quench that thirst! As long as one doesn't drink out of the great ocean of God's grace, one's thirst will not be quenched; craze will not be satisfied!

The water Jesus offered to the Samaritan woman was the water of God's grace that would form within her a spring that will



Prof. A. V. Itty, former Professor of English at Bishop Moore College, Mavelikara, is, now, engaged in the Evangelical, and Educational Ministry undertaken by ADORE in the Rayagada Dist. of Odisha. 94950 17850 (Mob)

provide her with life-giving water (v. 14).

Jesus is ready to give it free to anyone who comes to Him and ask. The only condition is that they should be ready to obey Him and follow Him. May we be able to do that.

May God help.

Food For Thought:

Only the One who died to give eternal life can lead us to the spring of life-giving water!



WORDS help you see FAR AHEAD; so please go FORWARD!

World Communion of Reformed Churches Global Institute of Theology

Another World Possible



Participants in the GIT 2023

"This intentional community of GIT 2023 has demonstrated that another world based on interdependence is possible and our intimate and intentional experiences will not only be memorable but also will become a source of transformation in our own glocal—global and local—realities as we bear witness to each other's struggles and resistance with God who is already at work and very present and leading our faithful journey."

The 2023 Global Institute of Theology (GIT) gathered more than three dozen people with two dozen languages from nearly 20 different countries in Fiji, for an intensive theological, educational, and cultural experience under the theme "Unsettling the Word in an Unsettled World."

The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) GIT nurtures and encourages the work of young theologians and scholars from around the world through an intensive short-term academic program designed to give participants an opportunity to learn, teach, and do theology in an inter-contextual and ecumenical way, connecting theology from the local to the regional and world levels.

"GIT is indeed a once in a lifetime, humbling and uplifting experience where we get to learn, unlearn, and relearn theological matters. I'm truly blessed to have been a part of it," said Asinate Mataitoga, a Fijian student.

The 2023 GIT is the first to be held in the Pacific region, specifically at the Pacific Theological College, in Suva, Fiji. During the first week, all of the participants experienced the incredible hospitality of the Bau Community with many students saying, "there are no words adequate to describe" what they have received.

"This intentional community of GIT 2023 has demonstrated that another world based on interdependence is possible and our intimate and intentional experiences will not only be memorable but also will become a source of transformation in our own glocal—global and local—realities as we bear witness to each other's struggles and resistance with God who is already at work and very present and leading our faithful journey." said Philip Vinod Peacock, WCRC Executive for Justice and Witness.

— WCRC News



World Association for Christian Communication Advance digital justice

WACC project partners in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East focussed on advancing digital justice in a world in digital transformation when they met for a learning, exchange, and networking consultation in Nairobi, Kenya, from 1 to 3 August.

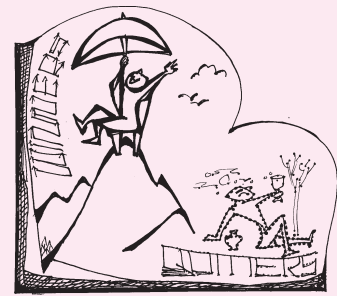
The gathering on "Communication Rights: Towards a Digital Justice Agenda" brought together representatives from 20 organizations in partnership with the WACC through its Communication for All (CAP) Program, and local civil society proponents of justice, democratic participation, and equality. Co-organizer was WACC's regional association in Africa.

The partner forum aims to begin drafting a common advocacy agenda for the broader WACC network towards the 20th anniversary of the World Summit for the Information Society, in 2025. The UN-level global process intends to bring different sectors together to put people at the centre of digital transformation worldwide.

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CHEER CHAT

Winners never quit
and
Quitters never win!
— Vince Lombardi



Christian Conference of Asia

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CCA Statement Against Trafficking In Persons

"Reach Every Victim of Trafficking: Leave No One Behind"

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As Christians, we are called to stand in solidarity with the marginalised and the vulnerable, protect the oppressed, and seek justice for the victims. Through partnerships and collaborations, we can create a net of safety to protect each victim of trafficking, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Our faith teaches us that we are all part of one body, interconnected and interdependent. The Bible reminds us of our duty to protect the vulnerable and seek justice for the oppressed. In Isaiah 1:17, we are called to **"learn to do right; seek justice, defend the oppressed, take up the cause of the orphaned, and plead the case of the widow"**. This commandment compels us to join hands and form partnerships to address the root causes of trafficking and work towards its eradication. It is through our collective efforts that we can build a just and compassionate society, free from the chains of exploitation. By sharing resources and information, we can equip front-line stakeholders to effectively track and respond to evolving trafficking trends. By partnering with survivors, we can establish trauma-informed policies and strategies that prioritise the well-being and empowerment of victims. **Our partnerships should extend to the trafficked people, ensuring that their voices are heard, their rights are protected, and their dignity is upheld.** Partnerships are the essential foundation for sustainable and successful anti-trafficking work. To effectively

combat trafficking, partnerships must extend beyond the boundaries of our immediate communities. International collaboration is crucial in identifying victims, prosecuting perpetrators, and implementing comprehensive protection services. By joining forces with governments, law enforcement agencies, NGOs, international organisations, and the private sector, we can strengthen our collective response to transnational trafficking and ensure that victims are not left without support. Only by working hand in hand can we dismantle the networks of traffickers and create a world where every victim is reached and protected.

Survivors of trafficking are not merely victims but essential partners in the anti-trafficking movement. Their lived experiences and unique perspectives bring invaluable insights that can shape programmes, policies, and strategies to ensure victim-centred, trauma-informed, and culturally competent responses. As Christians, we are called to love our neighbours and extend a helping hand to those in need, leaving no one behind in the fight against trafficking means ending the exploitation of victims, providing comprehensive support for survivors, and addressing the vulnerabilities that make certain groups more susceptible to trafficking. It requires us to build strong partnerships based on trust, respect and shared responsibility. We are reminded "to speak up for those who

cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute" (Proverbs 31:8). Let us heed this wisdom and prioritise survivor engagement and leadership in our partnerships.

On the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons-2023, the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) called on governments, law enforcement agencies, public services, and civil society to recommit their efforts to prevent trafficking, identify and support victims, and end impunity. We urge policymakers to create clear and resourced plans that prioritise the fight against trafficking and ensure the well-being of survivors.

Let us sensitise our churches to the reality of human trafficking and mobilise all sectors to take action. Together, let us strengthen our resolve to end trafficking, a crime that violates the basic dignity and rights accorded to each human being. By forging partnerships rooted in compassion, justice, and solidarity, we can build a world where no one is left behind and where the scourge of trafficking is eradicated. — CCA News

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